

## WHITE PAPER

### **Invasive Weed Control – A Background to Japanese Knotweed, Giant Hogweed and Himalayan Balsam**

The three non-native plants most commonly encountered in Britain of concern to homeowners, land owners, insurers, banks and other lending agents are Japanese knotweed, giant hogweed and Himalayan balsam.

National trade body The Property Care Association – which has a specialist Invasive Weed Control section - has drawn up this guide to give a background to each of these three plants, and to outline the treatment protocols for their eradication.

#### **Japanese knotweed (*Fallopia japonica*)**

Japanese knotweed has become increasingly well known in recent years, and is a growing commercial problem because of the challenges it causes in the urban environment.

The plant, which is native to eastern Asia, was introduced in the early 19th century to adorn the gardens of Victorian England.

As early as the beginning of the 20th century it was widely recognised as an invasive species.

Where the plant grows on development sites it can cause damage to hard structures and surfaces. Developers also often need to tackle the plant in order to avoid contravening the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

#### **Japanese knotweed – Do's**

Contact the professionals. Members of the Invasive Weed Control section of the PCA are qualified and regulated in Japanese knotweed management and can deliver efficient, effective and reliable treatment.

Do not ignore Japanese knotweed when you see it in your garden or building plot. It can grow quickly and costs will grow as the plant does.

#### **Japanese knotweed – Don'ts**

Don't flail Japanese knotweed as this could cause it to spread. Cutting with sharp hooks, slashers etc. or hand pulling is recommended to avoid any dispersal of cut fragments.

Don't cause the spread of Japanese knotweed stem and crowns. If you cut down Japanese knotweed, it is best to dispose of it on site. Material taken off site is classified as waste and must be safely contained and disposed of at a licensed disposal site.

Don't try to dig up Japanese knotweed as this will lead to a significant increase in stem density. Even a tiny fragment of the cut rhizome is capable of regeneration.

Don't spread soil contaminated with Japanese knotweed rhizome. Any soil that is obtained from ground within 7 metres horizontally and 3 metres deep of a Japanese knotweed plant could contain rhizome. The rhizome is highly regenerative and will readily grow into new plants.

Don't chip Japanese knotweed material. Mechanical chippers don't kill Japanese knotweed. If you spread the chipped material on soil, Japanese knotweed could regrow.

Don't dump garden waste contaminated with Japanese knotweed in the countryside - you will be breaking the law.

Don't add Japanese knotweed to compost. Compost it separately (preferably on plastic sheeting to prevent rooting) so that you can be sure it is dead.

Don't take Japanese knotweed to recycling centres that receive garden waste as it will contaminate the compost.

Finally - don't break the law. Remember, if you cause Japanese knotweed to spread you are guilty of an offence under the Wildlife and Countryside Act, 1981

### **Giant hogweed (*Heracleum mantegazzianum*)**

Giant hogweed was brought in to the UK as an ornamental plant. It is native of South-Eastern Europe and is a member of the carrot family. Generally it grows near watercourses and in damp meadows, although it can be found on waste ground where conditions are right.

It is a highly invasive plant that grows vigorously. Each plant can produce up to 50,000 seeds which can survive for up to 15 years. Giant hogweed is capable of growing to a height of up to 5 metres.

Contact with this invasive weed produces a skin reaction which is antagonised by exposure to sunlight. Blisters occur 24 to 48 hours after exposure. Damaged skin heals very slowly, leaving residual pigmentation that can develop into recurrent dermatitis.

A structured treatment program using appropriate herbicides allows giant hogweed to be effectively controlled.

### **Himalayan balsam (*Impatiens glandulifera*)**

Introduced to the UK in 1839 from Northern India, Himalayan or Indian balsam is most commonly found on river banks and damp areas, although it is capable of thriving in many other habitats.

The plant's dense stands on river banks impede the flow in flood conditions exacerbating flooding. They also shade out native plant species. Himalayan balsam also causes a less obvious problem for native species. Like many flowering plants, Himalayan balsam produces a sugary nectar to attract insects.

However, the flowers produce more nectar than any other native European species making it more attractive to bees and other insects, luring them away from pollinating our native flowers.

A structured treatment program using both herbicides and cultural control methods such as hand pulling can provide effective Himalayan balsam control. Annual treatments are needed, focussing on early control to kill plants before they seed.

Useful links:

<https://secure.fera.defra.gov.uk/nonnativespecies/home/index.cfm>

[http://www.devon.gov.uk/index/environment/naturalenvironment/biodiversity/japanese\\_knotweed/control\\_of\\_knotweed.htm](http://www.devon.gov.uk/index/environment/naturalenvironment/biodiversity/japanese_knotweed/control_of_knotweed.htm)

## **About The Property Care Association**

The Property Care Association Invasive Weed Control section provides consumers with a means of identifying specialist contractors and consultants capable of eradication of these and other invasive species across the UK.

Find out more at [www.property-care.org/invasive-species](http://www.property-care.org/invasive-species)